

# Living into God's Dream

Dismantling Racism in America

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# Questions for Individual or Group Reflection

These questions are designed to be discussed in groups or are appropriate for personal study. Use in ongoing contemplative prayer groups would be especially appropriate because silence can help to heal old wounds and allows for ideas and issues to emerge in ways that discussion without silence cannot.

## Beginning the Conversation

Where did you first become aware of race or racial differences? Can you name any of the emotions that you felt at that time? What did you learn about race as a child?

When did you first learn about being (*your race*)? What was the context? How did discovering that you were (*your race*) make you feel?

## CHAPTER 1

1. “Racism persists because a large segment of the population benefits from it.” Reflect upon this statement and list several ways you can see how segments of the population benefit from racism. How much thought have you given to this idea in the past?
2. If the transformation of hearts alone will not undo racism, what will? What other elements are needed to succeed in this challenging work?

3. What are the elements required to inspire our commitment to overcome racism?
4. Reflect upon Thurman's ideas about the way in which differences should be embraced. How do you embrace differences? What helps you to embrace them as you do?
5. What are the greatest challenges that you face in trying to live as a caring neighbor to everyone? How do you work to meet those challenges?

## ■ CHAPTER 2

1. What were you told about members of different racial or ethnic groups? What kinds of comments were made about members of different racial or ethnic groups in your household? Were there any racial or ethnic slurs or compliments or was yours a household where race wasn't discussed but only hinted at or acted out in innuendo?
2. Where did you learn about race in school—was it from textbooks or teachers and what exactly did you learn? How did this information form your attitudes or feelings about your own ethnic or racial group and those from other racial or ethnic groups?
3. How has your thinking about race changed and what led to the shift?
4. Who are you? What do you know of your identities that comprise your self-concept? What defines you in your daily life? Do you ever move through the day thinking about being \_\_\_\_\_ (race/gender/social status)?
5. What category (master status) do you focus on when you encounter a stranger? What does this choice of master status suggest about your self-concept?

### ■ CHAPTER 3

1. Do you have a story about a moment in your life that changes your viewpoint? If so, how did it change you?
2. Why is the idea of race as an illusion a difficult one for Black people to embrace?
3. What is colorblindness and why is it not helpful to people of color?
4. Do you think that people of color and White people can form authentic relationships built on trust, love, and acceptance? Do you have such relationships?

### ■ CHAPTER 4

1. Why is it dangerous to the human psyche to allow small racists acts, so called microaggressions, go unchecked?
2. Why is it unhealthy to accept negative projections as social constructions? How can a better pattern of choices be established?
3. Is it difficult for you to engage in conversation about race with those outside of your race? Reflect upon the reasons for your experiences or discomfort.
4. Why are the reasons for Black rage just as prevalent today as in the 1960s? What do you think will need to happen in the United States to change this situation?

### ■ CHAPTER 5

1. What do you think affected the author of this chapter the most as he learned about the reality of race? Think about the moments in your life that helped you to embrace the reality of race.
2. What are some of the conflicts that you have had around issues of social justice and equality?

3. How was Don Mosley influenced by Clarence Jordan?  
Have you had similar experiences with people who have crossed your path? How did the encounter inform your present outlook on life?
4. “Our greatest reward, whether in distant lands or back home at Jubilee, is the love we share with the beautiful children of this world.” Why do you think this is true? Does this statement reflect your view of the world in any way?

## CHAPTER 6

1. With whom do you talk about racism or White privilege? If you are White, how and when do you talk about these issues when you are with just White friends? Is the conversation different when you are with people of color? If so, why, and how does noticing that difference make you feel?
2. If racism is an exploitative system set up by White people, maintained by White people, and benefiting White people, who has the primary responsibility for dismantling it? If White people have a primary responsibility for dismantling structural racism, what is a primary responsibility for people of color?
3. A preview of the movie *Selma* led to a small group of friends wondering what might happen if every child in America—Black and White—could see this powerful portrayal of a defining moment in our history: How might it strengthen and inspire young people, creating even more energy for racial justice? This wonderful “what if?” question led to 300,000 students getting free tickets to see the movie in theaters across the country, and culminated in every American high school receiving a DVD of the film and a curriculum guide suggesting ways to use it. What “what if?” questions can you think of that hold the seeds of excitement and great change?

## CHAPTER 7

1. What interesting coincidences have happened in your life that might have led you to greater congruence between soul and the role that you play in life?
2. When have you been confronted with your own unconscious prejudice? How did you deal with it?
3. What experiences have you had of safe space in groups you worked with? How might these inform your work across lines of human difference in future work you do?

## CHAPTER 8

1. What thoughts and feelings are provoked within you when thinking about the American South as the Holy Land?
2. “Facts don’t fly high enough or reach deep enough. Poetry riding on melody is necessary,” proclaims the author of this chapter as he describes the Holy Land for the United States which is the American South. Why does music help make sense of the comparisons that are being made between the American South and the biblical Holy Land?
3. The author of this chapter argues that the places where God jolts us out of old ways of seeing into new ones can be called holy. How does this idea strike you? When have you been jolted from one place to another? How do you look at that experience? Does it seem holy to you? Why?
4. Both spirituals and the blues are used to illustrate the “Holy Land” quality of the American South. Can you imagine why the folks mentioned in the chapter sang the spirituals and the blues almost interchangeably?



## CHAPTER 9

1. This chapter tells the story of the Dismantling Racism Commission in Atlanta. What do you know about the work of dismantling racism which is occurring in your community? Who is charged with doing this work? Have you been involved in doing such work?
2. What do you believe could be the hardest part of having conversations about race such as the ones that you would expect to have in a dismantling racism workshop?
3. Do you find that there are many places in your community where a conversation on race can easily occur? If not, can you imagine yourself helping to facilitate the start of such an endeavor?
4. It seems that the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta is attempting to make dismantling racism a central place in its work. Do you see that as an option in your church or community?

### Suggested Activities to Promote Conversation on Race

1. Invite a small group of your peers who represent your racial group to have a conversation with you about a topic related to dismantling racism and racial healing. After several meetings and when the group feels secure enough, expand the group to include folks of other races.
2. Organize a film study group using films such as *Selma*, *Crash*, *Roots*, and *Twelve Years a Slave* to view together and engage in dialogue about.
3. Organize a book study using books that will enlighten all participants about race. You might wish to begin with one of the following or another similar book: *The New Jim Crow*, *Just Mercy*, *Between the World and Me*, and *Waking Up White*.

4. Make a personal commitment to read a set number of books related to a racial or ethnic group which is different from yours.
5. Be intentional about going to concerts, plays, and parts of the city in which you live where there is an opportunity for you to engage in conversation with folks who do not have the same ethnic and racial background as you.
6. Encourage your church, social club, homeowners association and others to make sure that all efforts are being made to be inclusive and do whatever you are able to do to raise awareness in these arenas about dismantling racism and racial healing.